CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An interface system for interactively building rules and constraints, comprising:

   an output display configured for showing to a user a partial complete rule with a current rule fragment, such rule fragment comprising a blank space;

   said output display further configured for showing to a user a list of potential selections for filling said blank space in said current rule fragment;

   said output display further configured for showing to a user a completed rule; and

   at least one input device configured for allowing a user to choose from said list a desired selection for filling said blank space and for allowing a user to directly enter values to create a selection for filling said blank space, thereby creating a completed rule.

2. The interface system of claim 1, further comprising a processing element configured for converting a completed rule into an internal representation suitable for inputting into a resource scheduling system.

3. The interface system of claim 2, comprising a processing element configured for assigning said completed rule to at least one person in a resource schedule.

4. The interface system of claim 3, wherein said resource schedule is a call center schedule and said at least one person is a call center agent.

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5. The interface system of claim 1, comprising an input device configured for allowing a user to assign a tolerance to said completed rule, whereby said completed rule is made self-referential.

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6. The interface system of claim 5, wherein said completed self-referential rule refers to a goal that is unspecified in an absolute sense.

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7. The interface system of claim 5, wherein said completed self-referential rule refers to a schedule that does not yet exist.

8. The interface system of claim 1, comprising a processing element configured to apply branching rules to previous selections of a user for filling said blank space, thereby interactively and dynamically creating future blank spaces and future lists of said potential selections.

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9. The interface system of claim 8, including a processing element configured to access a dynamic database, thereby to populate said lists of potential selections depending on the current value in real time of said dynamic database.

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10. The interface system of claim 1, wherein said completed rule is easily parsed by a human user.

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11. A computer-implemented method of building rules and constraints for a resource scheduling system, comprising:
displaying to a user a current rule fragment, such rule fragment comprising a blank space;
filling said blank space with a value selected by said user, thereby creating a completed rule; and

7   displaying said completed rule to said user.

1   12. The method of claim 11, wherein said user fills said
2   blank space by choosing from a list of potential
3   selections, said potential selections being displayed
4   to said user.

1   13. The method of claim 11, wherein said user fills said
2   blank space by direct entry of said value.

1   14. The method of claim 11, further comprising converting a
2   completed rule into an internal representation and
3   inputting said internal representation into a resource
4   scheduling system.

     15. The method of claim 14, comprising assigning said
         completed rule to at least one person in a
         resource schedule.

         16. The method of claim 15, wherein said resource
             schedule is a call center schedule and said
             at least one person is a call center agent.

1   17. The method of claim 11, further comprising assigning a
2   tolerance to said completed rule, whereby said
3   completed rule is made self-referential.

1   18. The method of claim 17, wherein said completed
2   self-referential rule refers to a goal that is
3   unspecified in an absolute sense.

1   19. The method of claim 18, wherein said
2   completed self-referential rule refers to a
3   schedule that does not yet exist.

1   20. The method of claim 11, further comprising applying
2   branching rules to previous selections of a user for

3 filling said blank space, thereby interactively and

4 dynamically creating future blank spaces and future

5 lists of said potential selections.

1 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising

2   accessing a dynamic database, thereby populating

3   said lists of potential selections in accordance

4   with the current value in real time of said

5   dynamic database.

1 22. The method of claim 11, wherein said completed rule is

   easily parsed by a human user.

23. A resource scheduling system for a call center schedule,

  comprising:

   an interface system for interactively building rules

   and constraints, said interface system including:

     an output display configured for showing to a user

     a current rule fragment, such rule fragment

     comprising a blank space;

     said output display further configured for showing

9   to a user a list of potential selections for

10   filling said blank space in said current rule

11   fragment;

12   said output display further configured for showing

13   to a user a completed rule; and

14   at least one input device configured for allowing

15   a user to choose from said list a desired

16   selection for filling said blank space and for

17   allowing a user to directly enter values to create

18   a selection for filling said blank space, thereby

19   creating a completed rule.

1 24. The resource scheduling system of claim 23, comprising

2   a processing element configured for assigning said

3   completed rule to at least one call center agent.

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25. The resource scheduling system of claim 23, comprising an input device configured for allowing a user to assign a tolerance to said completed rule, whereby said completed rule is made self-referential.

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26. The resource scheduling system of claim 25, wherein said completed self-referential rule refers to a goal that is unspecified in an absolute sense.

27. The resource scheduling system of claim 25, wherein said completed self-referential rule refers to a schedule that does not yet exist.

28. The resource scheduling system of claim 23, comprising a processing element configured to apply branching rules to previous selections of a user for filling said blank space, thereby interactively and dynamically creating future blank spaces and future lists of said potential selections.

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29. The resource scheduling system of claim 28, including a processing element configured to access a dynamic database, thereby to populate said lists of potential selections depending on the current value in real time of said dynamic database.

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30. The resource scheduling system of claim 23, wherein said completed rule is easily parsed by a human user.